

Message Text

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PAGE 01 HELSIN 00555 180759Z

17

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 /020 W
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R 180637Z MAR 76
FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
TO USDOC WASHDC
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 9749
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BBAK, BTIO, FI

SUBJECT: SALE OF WIDE-BODIED JETS TO USSR: ROLE OF FINNISH
CONSULTANT OLLI BACKMAN

REF: (A) USDOC 3568 (B) HELSINKI 506

1. SUMMARY: FINNISH "CONSULTANT" OLLI BACKMAN GIVES MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HIS ROLE IN POSSIBLE USSR PURCHASE OF US WIDE-BODIED JET AIRCRAFT. ACCORDING TO BACKMAN, M.L. FREEMAN OF MCDONNELL-DOUGLAS (MDC CORPORATION MENTIONED REFTEL B) SCHEDULED ARRIVE HELSINKI MARCH 18 FOR TALKS WITH SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIALS. EMBASSY REMAINS DUBIOUS ABOUT BACKMAN'S CAPABILITY TO FACILITATE TRANSACTION. END SUMMARY.

2. MR. OLLI BACKMAN CONTACTED COMMERCIAL OFFICER MARCOTT ON MARCH 15 RE SALE US AIRCRAFT TO USSR. HE HAD NO DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT HIS CLAIMS OF SPECIAL POSITION RE SALES TO USSR NOR COULD HE CITE ANY SUBSTANTIAL PROJECTS IN WHICH HE HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL INTERMEDIARY. HE STATED HOTEL PROJECT (PARA 2, REF B) IS STILL VIABLE. HE INSISTED SOVIET EMBASSY CONTACTED HIM, ON BASIS HIS BEING KNOWN AS AN EAST-WEST TRADER, AND EXPRESSED INTEREST IN BUYING TEN WIDE-BODIED AIRCRAFT. IN RESPONSE TO MARCOTT'S QUESTIONS, HE STATED HE WAS INVITED BY SOVIET EMBASSY TO WRITE DIRECTLY TO USSR
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MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION WITH PROPOSAL OF WHAT HE

COULD ACCOMPLISH ON THEIR BEHALF. HE HAS NOT RECEIVED
A REPLY TO LETTER SENT LAST WEEK.

3. BACKMAN STATED HE HAS ARRANGED APPOINTMENT FOR
M.L. FREEMAN OF MCDONNELL-DOUGLAS WITH SOVIET EMBASSY
ON THURSDAY, MARCH 18. IF MEETING TRANSPIRES, USSR
ATTITUDE MAY BE CLARIFIED. COMMERCIAL OFFICER IS NOT
ATTENDING MEETING. COMMOFF SUGGESTED TO BACKMAN THAT
HE ASK HIS CONTACT AT USSR EMBASSY TO GIVE WRITTEN
STATEMENT ESTABLISHING BACKMAN'S BONA FIDES OR TO CALL
COMMOFF, BUT BACKMAN SIDESTEPED IDEA TWICE.

4. BACKMAN REQUESTED COMMERCIAL OFFICER TO CONTACT
BOEING TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS ENDEAVOR
TO SELL WIDE-BODIED AIRCRAFT. COMMOFF DECLINED.
BACKMAN EXPRESSED SURPRISE AT BOEING'S LACK OF ENTHUSIASM
"DESPITE FACT THAT MEETING ALSO ATTENDED BY BEWT
REPRESENTATIVE." (MEETING REFERRED TO IS APPARENTLY ONE
GROWING OUT OF BACKMAN CONTACT WITH BEWT REPORTED
PARA 1, REF A.) THIS APPEARS TO BE TYPICAL BACKMAN
APPROACH -- THAT IS, INTERPRETING OR REPRESENTING
NORMAL COMMERCIAL ASSISTANCE AS ENDORSEMENT. WE
SUSPECT THAT SOVIET EMBASSY CONTACT WITH BACKMAN
MAY HAVE BEEN INITIATED BY LATTER AND THAT HE IS
EXAGGERATING HIS POTENTIAL VALUE AS GO-BETWEEN.

5. FINNAIR BOARD CHAIRMAN KORHONEN TOLD COMMOFF THAT FINNAIR
CONTACTED SOVIET MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION IN RESPONSE TO MCD
INQUIRY AND MINISTRY OFFICIAL PROFESSED IGNORANCE, BUT SAID
KEY PERSON WAS OUT OF TWON AND FINNAIR EXPECTS ANSWER IN
NEXT DAY OR TWO.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 MAR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976HELSIN00555
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760102-0461
From: HELSINKI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760348/aaaabppa.tel
Line Count: 93
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 HELSINKI 506
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 APR 2004 by CollinP0>; APPROVED <09 AUG 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SALE OF WIDE-BODIED JETS TO USSR: ROLE OF FINNISH CONSULTANT OLLI BACKMAN
TAGS: BBAK, BTIO, FI
To: COM
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006